



Master tacticians Roberto Mancini and Gareth Southgate the real stars of Euro 2020

► Italy and England managers excelled after employing distinct coaching styles and strategies



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Italy celebrate after beating England in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley on Sunday, July 11. (Catherine Ivill/Getty)

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Jul 14, 2021

Italy and manager Roberto Mancini thoroughly deserved the Euro 2020 title. England were good as well but fell short when it mattered most.

But in the end, it was the managerial style of Mancini and Three Lions boss Gareth Southgate that truly stood out. Both played extremely decisive roles in taking their teams to the final at Wembley, [where the Azzurri prevailed via a penalty shoot-out](#).

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It is said that the real test of a manager is at a club, where he has to manage a group of players in games every week, and not with a national team where he doesn't have time to train and is more a choreographer.

That's not quite true.

Southgate and Mancini did much more than just put players together, manage emotions, and devise strategies. They created a new organisation, new game models and united their respective countries in the process.

Southgate was part of the reforms process that was introduced after England's embarrassing exit from the 2010 World Cup. The Three Lions initially developed an Elite Player Performance plan and later the England DNA project, which studied countries around the world to identify changes that needed to be made at St George's Park.

Having been a part of the project from the beginning, Southgate helped change the atmosphere radically and he didn't need to look at the statutes to pick his team.



Tactically, during the Euros, there were early hiccups. His breakthrough moment came against Germany when he changed from 4-3-3 to 3-5-2 with three central defenders, nullifying the German attack.

In the semi-finals, he employed the 4-2-3-1 formation that accounted for Denmark. And in the final against Italy, he returned to 3-4-3, although, he changed it during the final, which showed bravery.

He showed that his tactical systems were well thought out and tested. By the end of it all, Southgate had managed to build a team and not a set of superstars.

Despite the disappointment of the final and criticism over choice for players for the penalty shoot-out, this England team is clearly in a much better position now than they were before Southgate took over.

Italy too have a master tactician of their own.

Mancini and Italy represent something very rare in modern football: a national team at the forefront of tactical change.

Mancini took over in May 2018 amid utter chaos after the team failed to qualify for the World Cup, a first in 60 years. He had inherited an Italian side in the deepest crisis in its history.

For Mancini, it was a huge challenge. After leading Manchester City to their first Premier League title in 2012, his career suffered. He left City at the end of the following season after a disappointing title defence and an FA Cup final loss to Wigan. The move to Galatasaray and the return to Inter did not go well. Zenit Saint Petersburg always seemed like an odd choice.

At Italy, it all clicked into place. Mancini revolutionised the team, implementing an aggressive style that no one expected.

He rejected more complex systems and lowered the tactical demands in a 4-3-3 without a 'trequartista' (the Italian No 10).

It was amazing to see how well-oiled the team is while defending. It quickly goes from 4-3-3 to 4-5-1, with the wingers retreating almost automatically. The result was an unbeaten run of 34 games, one behind the international record and something unthinkable at the end of 2017.

Joy has returned to the tifosi. Italy may lack the obvious stars of some previous teams, but they have a coherent tactical structure and a team of dedicated players who believe in the current philosophy. Mancini's philosophy.

